

### Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently Amended) Apparatus comprising:  
a tree stand operatively attached to a tree, said tree stand having a platform disposed substantially horizontally while the tree stand is attached to the tree;  
a first strap disposed around and secured to the tree;  
a second strap for being disposed around a person;  
a strap assembly operatively attached at one end thereof to the first strap and operatively attached at the other end thereof to the second strap, said strap assembly being between six (6) and fifteen (15) inches long in a relaxed condition, said strap assembly being capable of stretching at least three (3) inches under a force of three hundred (300) pounds; and  
a tether operatively attached to the first strap at one end thereof and to the second strap at the other end thereof, said tether being longer than the strap assembly when the strap assembly is fully stretched.

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2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim ~~2~~1 wherein said second strap is part of a multi-strap harness.

4. (Currently Amended) Apparatus comprising:  
a first strap adapted to be disposed around and secured to a tree;  
a second strap for being disposed around a person; and

a strap assembly operatively attached at one end thereof to the first strap and operatively attached at the other end thereof to the second strap, said strap assembly being between six (6) and fifteen (15) inches long in a relaxed condition, said strap assembly being capable of stretching at least three (3) inches under a force of three hundred (300) pounds; and

a tether operatively attached to the first strap at one end thereof and to the second strap at the other end thereof, said tether being longer than the strap assembly when the strap assembly is fully stretched.

5. (Canceled.)

6. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim ~~5~~4 wherein said second strap is part of a multi-strap harness.

7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 4 wherein the strap assembly comprises a rubber strap with D-rings attached to each end thereof.

8. (Currently Amended.) The apparatus of claim ~~5~~4 wherein the tether comprises a nylon strap.

9. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the length of the strap assembly when fully stretched is less than the distance between a part of the platform in contact with the tree and a part of the platform farthest from the tree.

10. (Original) The apparatus of claim 7 wherein the rubber strap is approximately eight and one half inches long in a relaxed condition.

11. (Original) The apparatus of claim 10 where in the strap assembly, including the D-rings is approximately ten inches long in a relaxed condition.

12. (Original) The apparatus of claim 7 wherein said tether comprises a nylon sheath disposed around said rubber strap.

13. (Original) The apparatus of claim 12 wherein said sheath has one end extending through one of the D-rings and another end thereof extending through the other one of the D-rings.

14. (Original) The apparatus of claim 13 wherein said sheath is substantially longer than the length of the rubber strap in a relaxed condition.

15. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein said sheath has a loop on an intermediate portion thereof where the sheath covers the rubber strap; and wherein the other end of the sheath is disposed under the loop when the rubber strap is in a

relaxed condition and is pulled out of the loop when the rubber strap has stretched sufficiently to pull the other end of the sheath out of the loop.

16. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 1, wherein said strap assembly has a resilient portion that is capable of supporting a load in excess of 300 pounds in a suspended fashion.

17. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 16, wherein the resilient portion of the strap assembly is fabricated from a core of hard rubber material.

18. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 17 wherein the resilient portion of the strap is made mostly of natural rubber.

19. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as in claim ~~2~~ 1, wherein the strap assembly and the tether are independently connected between said first strap and said second strap.

20. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 19, wherein the effective length of the strap assembly is less than the effective length of the tether.

21. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 1, wherein the strap assembly has opposed ends each having a generally barrel shaped configuration and an intermediate portion having a generally figure eight cross-sectional configuration.

22. (Original) The apparatus as in claim 21, wherein the barrel shaped opposed ends of the strap assembly are aligned generally perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the intermediate portion of the strap assembly.

23. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said strap assembly stretches no more than fifteen (15) inches under a load of three hundred (300) pounds.

24. (Original) The apparatus of claim 4 wherein said strap assembly stretches no more than fifteen (15) inches under a load of three hundred (300) pounds.

25. (Original) Apparatus comprising:

- a tree;
- a tree stand operatively attached to the tree, said tree stand having a platform disposed substantially horizontally while the tree stand is attached to the tree;
- a first strap disposed around and secured to the tree;
- a second strap for being disposed around a person;
- a strap assembly operatively attached at one end thereof to the first strap and operatively attached at the other end thereof to the second strap, said strap assembly being between six (6) and fifteen (15) inches long in a relaxed condition, said strap assembly being capable of stretching at least three (3) inches under a force of three hundred (300) pounds; and
- a tether operatively attached to said first strap and to said second strap, said tether being longer than the strap assembly.